

The Right Honourable Justin Trudeau, Prime Minister of Canada
The Honourable Melanie Joly, Minister of Foreign Affairs
The Honourable Mary Ng, Minister of International Trade
The Honourable Marie-Claude Bibeau, Minister of Agriculture and Agri-Food

January 5, 2023

We call on the Canadian Government to back Mexico's plan to phase out GMO corn and the use of glyphosate by 2024.

Dear Prime Minister and Federal Ministers:

On January 9th and 10th, 2023 Prime Minister Justin Trudeau and several Canadian Ministers will be at a tri-national gathering in Mexico City meeting with counterparts from Mexico and the United States. There will be many trade-related discussions of issues that impact North America.

One of the issues on that agenda will be the December 31st, 2020 decree by Mexico announcing an import ban on GMO corn by 2024, along with the phase out of the use of glyphosate. These measures taken by Mexico are to protect small farmers' livelihoods and provide consumers access to safe and healthy foods. Mexico is corn's birthplace and corn is central to historical cultural values built into its domestic production and distribution systems.

We would like to draw the Canadian government's attention to the affirmation contained in a Statement endorsed by 335 civil society organizations and concerned individuals from Mexico:

"We reiterate our support for the [Mexican government] policy implemented to ban the planting of transgenic corn and glyphosate gradually by 2024, as well as for the NOM-051 that allows the implementation of a frontal warning labeling on packaged food and beverages. We consider these measures to be a necessary and fundamental step in the transition to a healthy and sustainable agri-food model. [We] emphasize that the health crisis caused by COVID-19 is a call to leave behind the ... model that devastates the environment and health and instead construct comprehensive public policies ... which guarantee Mexico's production of healthy, nutritious, fair and competitive food in order to achieve food self-sufficiency and food sovereignty. We agree and support President Andrés Manuel López Obrador in the decision to move forward and make the right to food self-sufficiency and food sovereignty a reality."

We welcome Ottawa's recent focus on improving our public health care system, and on protecting our environment, but we call on Ottawa to accelerate our own country's efforts

in limiting exposure to dangerous chemicals and pesticides, while holding polluters accountable and prioritizing environmental justice, particularly for Indigenous Peoples and farm communities. In a letter backed by 105 Canadian organizations, the authors state:

“We demand government oversight of all genetically engineered foods and seeds including those produced through gene editing. All genetically engineered foods and seeds should be subject to government safety assessments and mandatory reporting to government.

We call on the Ministers of Health and Agriculture and Agri-Food to commit to transparency and independent science in the regulation of all genetically engineered organisms for use in food and farming.

We oppose the sale of unregulated, unreported genetically engineered foods and seeds. We oppose the proposals from Health Canada and the Canadian Food Inspection Agency (CFIA) that would allow many gene-edited genetically engineered foods and seeds onto the market with no government oversight.”

In the face of projected U.S. pressure on Mexico during the upcoming Tri-National meetings to walk back key aspects of their agricultural policies, 80 U.S. organizations representing farmer, worker, consumer, public health, and sustainable agriculture constituencies, and other food systems research and advocacy organizations, recently wrote to key U.S. officials:

“...to express our grave concerns regarding a pattern of ongoing interference and pressure exerted by multinational pesticide companies and other agribusiness interests that seek to undermine the Mexican government’s policy decisions to protect its peoples’ health, environment and the integrity of their food and farming systems.”

Canada needs to step up and support Mexico’s ongoing efforts to ban imports of GMO corn for public consumption and phase out the use of glyphosate. Karen Hansen-Kuhn, program director at the U.S.-based Institute for Agriculture and Trade Policy, explains why:

“Mexico has a sovereign right to determine the rules governing its food system. The U.S. has its own restrictions on imports to ensure food safety. The EU has restricted production and imports of GMOs for decades, as have other countries around the world. Trade rules require that those processes not be arbitrary or unfairly discriminate against particular countries, but they must not be used to overturn public initiatives to enhance countries’ ability to feed their nations more sustainably.”

We, the undersigned, call on Prime Minister Trudeau and Canadian Ministers in attendance at the Mexico City Tri-national meetings in January 2023, to

unequivocally support Mexico's ban on GMO corn and its phase out of glyphosate use in the country's agriculture.

**cc. Jagmeet Singh, Leader of the New Democratic Party of Canada
Elizabeth May, Parliamentary Leader of the Green Party of Canada**

Sincerely:

- Canadian Biotechnology Action Network
- People's Health Movement-Canada
- Safe Food Matters Inc.
- National Farmers Union (CAN)
- Toronto non-GMO Coalition (ON)
- GE Free Comox Valley (BC)
- No More GMOs - Toronto (ON)
- Environment Haliburton (ON)
- Climate Legacy (CAN)
- Northumberland Coalition for Social Justice (ON)
- Council of Canadians - Le Conseil des Canadiens
- Northumberland Chapter of the Council of Canadians - Trade Justice Group (ON)
- Windsor-Essex Chapter of the Council of Canadians (ON)
- Kitchener-Waterloo Chapter of the Council of Canadians (ON)
- Peterborough and Kawartha Chapter of the Council of Canadians (ON)
- London Chapter of the Council of Canadians (ON)
- Kitchissippi-Ottawa Valley Chapter of the Council of Canadians (ON)
- Guelph Chapter of the Council of Canadians (ON)
- Powell River Chapter of the Council of Canadians (BC)
- Regina Chapter of the Council of Canadians (SK)
- Quinte Chapter of the Council of Canadians (ON)
- Ottawa Chapter of the Council of Canadians (ON)
- North Shore Chapter of the Council of Canadians (NS)
- Kawartha Highlands and Lakes Chapter of the Council of Canadians (ON)
- Avalon Chapter of the Council of Canadians (NL)
- Hamilton Chapter of the Council of Canadians (ON)
- Peel Chapter of the Council of Canadians (ON)
- Nelson-West Kootenay Chapter of the Council of Canadians (BC)